

THE "MILITANT" FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

Education and Democratic Discussion Is the Better Way

DAVID RIESMAN

IT WAS not so long ago that Jews sought to defend themselves against anti-Semitism by discreet and persuasive apologetics and by the quiet intercession of their "best people" with the authorities. Though these methods survive, the past two decades have tended to replace them by pressure-group tactics in which Jewish organizations take the offensive—by means of picketing or boycott, or the threat of these weapons—against books (*The Merchant of Venice*), movies (*Oliver Twist*), teachers (City College's Knickerbocker), performers (Giesecking, Furtwängler), and exhibits (the German Industries Fair) that are thought to promote or condone anti-Semitism. It must be at once conceded that much has been accomplished by these methods in the last years in the field of civil rights and fair employment practices. Yet the new "militancy" has brought with it new problems, at once ethical and practical.

The classic American pattern encourages

STIRRED by Hitler's extermination of the Jews, and the wartime rise of anti-Semitic demagogues in the United States, American Jewry developed sizeable programs to fight prejudice and hate-mongering, and to safeguard democratic rights generally. In the differing postwar climate, with the ebb of aggressive anti-Semitism, community leadership has been engaged in a period of review and stocktaking of its approaches and methods, with a view to better adapting the work to now prevailing conditions. DAVID RIESMAN's article, based to a considerable extent on an address given the National Community Relations Advisory Council, is a contribution to this continuing discussion; in its emphasis on education and long-range intergroup relations, it is not untypical of much present thinking and reshaping of programs in the defense field. Mr. Riesman is professor of social science in the College of the University of Chicago, and the author (in collaboration with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer) of *The Lonely Crowd*, a study of American character, recently published by the Yale University Press.

personal self-reliance, hitting back as an individual against attack, but Jews have scarcely felt themselves more free to do this than the Negroes in the South have. This situation promotes smoldering resentment and repressed aggression, which often seek release through the channels of Jewish organizational life. So, for example, a Jew who in private life puts up with mildly anti-Semitic friends, or has changed his name, may support an organization whose public "militancy" assuages his own private discomfort. At the same time, the "leader" of such an organization, afraid of losing his following to still more militant leaders, may be far more outspoken in his public "militancy" vis-à-vis non-Jews than he is in private life.

Whatever the effect of pressure-group tactics in reducing anti-Semitism in the larger American community, they do seem to have gone a long way toward enforcing unanimity among Jews themselves. Though only a small minority of Jews would seem to be what Alfred Kazin has called "mindless militants," this group has steadily gained a disproportionate power, often enabling them to intimidate the community, so that many Jewish "leaders" are actually the captives of the most violent and intemperate of their "followers." When a part of this article was presented in an address to a meeting of the National Community Relations Advisory Council (April 30, 1949), a number of people told me they agreed with my views but were in no position to say so publicly. Apparently, they were afraid of being called "scared Jews."

Just as liberals in the days of the Popular Front could often be forced to take extremist positions in order to prove that they were not "petty bourgeois," not "enemies of the working class," so today the more comfortably situated Jews, who are very likely a numerical majority, can often be brought into line

to support ill-advised policies which are justified by picturing the Jews (in America as well as elsewhere) as an oppressed group—a picture that plays much the same role in these tactics as the Stalinist picture of the workers as members of a “proletariat.” Thus, many American Jews who feel guilty about having been untouched by the Nazi holocaust, guilty about their “assimilation,” guilty perhaps about not being Palestinian soldiers or pioneers—in addition to all the other guilt-feelings they have as middle-class Americans—are easy ideological victims of Jews with more aggression and (frequently) lesser social standing, whom, in an earlier day and for equally bad reasons, they would have snubbed. In fact, in order to “prove themselves,” the most assimilated occasionally become the most militant. Every threat or presumed threat to Jews anywhere in the world can be converted into a lever for the “militant” minority of Jewish organizational life, much as Russian threats to American interests anywhere reinforce the power of our self-proclaimed militant anti-Communists to put a blanket of “unity” over American life as a whole.

IT SHOULD, however, be noted that there are factors not peculiar to the Jews that motivate similar cycles of “appeasement” and “militancy” among many other ethnic groups in America.* The first generation of immigrants enjoyed an improved lot. They had come to this country, or migrated within it, in order to find greater economic and social opportunity, and they had found it. The standard of comparison was always with the old country—an old country assumed to have remained unchanged.

The second and third generations apply a different standard of comparison. For they are sufficiently Americanized, which means sufficiently middle class, to judge their experience in terms of a creed of complete equality of opportunity. While the older generations were glad to get into a college, the more

recent ones are terribly hurt if they do not get into a fraternity; while the older generations were happy to achieve economic security and civic equality, the younger generations find exclusion from the Racquet or Hunt Club a grievous burden. Sensitive to rebuffs to which their parents would have given scant heed, they turn in their disillusionment and resentment towards ethnic nationalism. National revivals—Irish, Polish, Czech, Italian—are thus mainly the prerogative of the native-born; in this sense, nationalism is paradoxically a sign of Americanization. Those American-born Jews who today seemingly reject America's promise in favor of Israel have been shaped by American schools, American economic institutions, and American culture in general: their very effort and style of protest against America proceeds mainly along American lines, even though colored by specifically Jewish factors, and testifies to their “assimilation.”

In terms of most objective indexes of discrimination, it is undeniable that the position of Jews has substantially improved in the last generation. There are many more Jews in the universities, and on the whole there is considerably less prejudice. Though indeed it is still a long way towards complete equality, I would guess that there is today, both in the fields of law and academic life,† more discrimination against women than against Jews. Yet, the improving situation of Jews in America corresponds to a mounting sensitivity by Jews to all manifestations of prejudice.

FURTHER understanding of the psychological complex behind the need of many

†In the field I know best, that of academic life, the situation has changed very much, even in the last ten years. I recall that when in 1938 and 1939 I tried to find places for Jewish refugees in American law schools, as the executive secretary of a committee headed by John W. Davis, I found my efforts hampered not only by anti-Semitism but also by well-intentioned persons who felt that Jews had so little chance in academic or professional life that they had best go into business. Today the men our committee succeeded in helping find very few of the old obstacles: they teach in the top law schools and have jobs in the government and in Wall Street law offices.

*I owe much to Professors Oscar Handlin of Harvard and Everett Hughes of the University of Chicago for my understanding of this cycle.

American Jews to assert themselves aggressively can be found if we look at some of the targets against which Jewish groups have recently directed their fire. Almost invariably, these targets have been weak ones. In some cases, those attacked (or "pressured") have been movie exhibitors or movie lords—"lords" who tremble so readily before an archbishop or a Hearst or a Congressional committee. Another target is the public school boards, so often submissive to whoever in the community can make a big noise. Jewish bigots cooperated with Catholic bigots years ago to deny Bertrand Russell a chair at City College in New York. In descending on Professor Knickerbocker at the same institution, Jewish organizations had of course a rather different case, since he was charged not only with anti-Semitic opinions but with actual discriminatory practices in running his department. But what about the assumption apparently made in this case that if he could be proved to have made anti-Semitic remarks he should be fired—as if private anti-Semitism in City College (of all places!) is the menace that it might be, say, in Congress, or in the utility industries.

Still another target for American Jews is supplied by all things German. Although Germany is, of course, potentially strong, she has been weak since the war in the important sense that American educators, trust-busters, and others have found it easier to influence (or at least make a fuss about) American policy in Germany than about comparable problems on the domestic political scene. Just as anti-Semites portray Jews as powerful, in order to justify attacking them under the code of fair play, so the anti-German Jews have utilized allegations of "the German danger" to justify notions as cruel and crazy as the Morgenthau Plan. To be sure, the American Jews have probably not been strong enough to affect appreciably the course of events in Germany, either for good or ill. But they have been strong enough to keep Giese-king out of the country—and to fixate in the Jewish community the picture of a solidly unregenerate German people, as openly and intensely anti-Semitic today as under the

Nazis, thus inhibiting any serious discussion of German realities. This last is yet another example of the attempted *Gleichschaltung* of Jewish organizational life.

In the case of Germany, Jewish concern is often rationalized in terms of fighting alleged resurgences of anti-Semitism there. Actually, however, it would seem to be motivated by a natural desire to remind the world of the slaughter of fellow Jews. It is probably inevitable that those who have not suffered should feel a certain guilt about that very fact, especially if one feels that not all was done that might have been done to rescue the doomed—and if one also has to combat one's own desire to forget and gloss over what happened. But the sensitive person should need no reminders: he lives all too constantly with the memory of history's crimes and disasters. Conversely, the insensitive person may react negatively to reminders, especially if he feels that they are sometimes a form of moral blackmail. At the same meeting at which my own address was delivered, another speaker who had been concerned with Jewish affairs in Germany mentioned how, when he would lay his complaints before a certain American general, the latter would say, in a friendly tone, "Now, don't throw the six million at me again."

TRUE, the American Jews who attack weak and easy targets in this country, or who applaud such tactics at home and abroad, certainly do not interpret their action as bullying or blackmail; and they would be horrified to be classified with those groups who use force or threats of force to censor art, or to suppress free discussion. And let us grant that there may be some warrant, emotionally at least, in viewing a Furtwängler or Knickerbocker as a symbol both of the European massacre and of the worldwide threat of political anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, while any instance of anti-Semitism *may* testify to a fascist potential, there is a grave danger of distortion when a hotel's restriction, a chance remark, or a silly book come to be automatically identified with Nazi cruelties, and call forth a reflex action of violent indignation

and an effort at aggressive suppression. A kind of fantasy is built up which, though it has much more justification behind it, curiously resembles that of the anti-Semite who sees in the acts of the individual Jew the systematic conspiratorial intentions of a whole race.

In coping with anti-Semitism, Jews have a problem similar to that with which all Americans are faced in coping with the Russians. As Americans we have to learn to live with relative comfort and self-control in a state of cold war that in all likelihood will go on for many years. If we get panicky, and unable to keep our heads in the face of even serious hostility, we can bring disaster on ourselves as well as on the world. Thus, for instance, if Americans were to concentrate on hating the Russians, we should already be reduced by them part-way to their own level. As Jews we have even less choice. We are going to be able at best only to contain anti-Semitism in America, to prevent its spread, to prevent violent incursions and active discrimination; we have no chance whatsoever of wiping out anti-Semitism by force, although maybe some Jews, underneath fantastic fears, nourish even more fantastic hopes. But since this is so, those Jews who are over-alert to anti-Semitism and go to all lengths to lash out at any and every sign of it are likely to waste too much of their time and resources. And they will tend to neglect the things that might be done to better the lot and widen the horizon of all Americans, including Jews.

Perhaps Jews, looking at the European experience, consciously or unconsciously feel that no dividing line separates an anti-Semitic remark from an extermination camp. This is to assume more or less that there are no social and psychological barriers between thought and action, and between moderate action and extreme action. And it also assumes that Americans are not bound by specific traditions and habits. We Americans, Gentile and Jew, like big talk, and much that passes for anti-Semitic expression is big talk, with no thought or dream behind it of real action. And, happily, it is a fact that Americans draw a line between anti-Semitic remarks and ac-

tual persecution, and it is by virtue of this distinction (and the political and social institutions built upon it) that Jews in America have little more occasion for anxiety as Jews than for anxiety as Americans.

SO FAR I have assumed that the books and movies Jews are attacking are in fact anti-Semitic. But is this really so? Who will deny that there have been Jewish Fagins? And are these the worst men to be found in the gallery of literature and life? If these things are the worst that can be said in serious literature about Jews, they are surely no worse than what can be said about other people. Indeed, as I recall *Oliver Twist*—the book, I mean, since I haven't been permitted to see the film—Dickens never makes Fagin's Jewishness an excuse for general charges against the Jews. And Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* puts into the mouth of Shylock one of the most eloquent pleas for the humanity of Jews that has ever been written.

But even if I were wrong about these particular works, it still would not change my view. There are violently anti-Semitic writers, such as Ezra Pound or Louis-Ferdinand Céline, who have the right to say what they please, just as Montherlant, Farnham, and Lundberg have the right to say what they please about women. When Jews try to suppress such writers, they act as if they had something to hide. My own feeling is that Jews have nothing to hide, either in literature or in life. At one time I thought it might be practicable to draw a line between group-libel of the Jews which included false statements of fact—such things as are now peddled by Curt Asher and William Dudley Pelley—and works of art in which Jews are dealt with perhaps unsympathetically, but as part of a whole picture of life.* But, in time, my studies convinced me that there were virtually insuperable administrative difficulties in drawing such a line, and in entrusting it to public officials and juries, and that the dangers outweighed the possible benefits. Suits

*See my article, "Democracy and Defamation," *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 42, 1942.

for libel by individual Jews and replies in the forum of public discussion are, of course, another matter entirely, though hardly one of great importance. My general feeling is that our tradition of civil liberty is the best defense we have for individuals and for minorities; and Jews have every interest, as Jews and as Americans, in seeing that this tradition remains strong and vital.

In view of what happened in Europe and of the existence of anti-Semitism in America, it is not surprising that Jews feel weak and therefore lack confidence that full and free discussion will be just to them. Nevertheless, I feel that we should encourage such discussion. Jews are, after all, much more interesting to talk about than anti-Semitism. And I think it best that we should be prepared to take our chances in such a discussion, only making efforts to see that it is stimulating and abundant.

AT PRESENT we may distinguish four levels of talk about Jews in America, four levels that hardly mix or meet. At the top level are the intellectual and artistic circles, of Jews and non-Jews, where there is at the same time curiosity and matter-of-factness about things Jewish. The pages of *COMMENTARY* are an excellent illustration of this kind of discussion. There one finds reporting of Jewish life without a fearful concern for public relations; philosophic and sociological debate about what, if anything, it means to be a Jew; and, in the department "From the American Scene," occasional pictures of the fabulously rich, interesting, and varied life of Jews in America. On this level, one can also find literature that is not a tract against anti-Semitism but an exploration of Jewish consciousness and unconsciousness; there comes to mind Saul Bellow's fine novel, *The Victim*.

Our second level of discussion is in the liberal middle class, both Jewish and non-Jewish, the class responsible for putting car cards about brotherhood in the New York subways. A friend of mine claims to have heard a radio jingle over a New York station, "He's no Jew, he's like you." I suspect him of satire.

But if it didn't actually happen it might well have, given the notion of "defense" prevailing in many advertising minds. It is here that a mythical world is constructed in which Negroes and whites, Jews and non-Jews—and, for that matter, men and women—are "really" alike; such differences as there still are, being expected to wither away like the Marxist state. On this level Jews fail to see that it is their very difference which may be both worthwhile and appealing. This insistence on denying differences, or on seeking to eradicate them, identifies "American" with "Americanization"—and insists that for people to be treated as equals they must have more than their humanity in common.

The chief quality I sense in discussion about Jews on this second level is piety, a kind of dreary piety, filled with platitudes about unity, amity, democracy, and so on. This piety, it seems to me, as it spreads throughout "official" culture, through our churches, schools, and many voluntary associations, has two consequences. On the one hand, in the obedient circles it tends to stultify observation and thought. On the other hand, it enables those rebellious souls who refuse to subscribe to it to appear as terribly dashing and bold and "militant." The violent anti-Semites and those Jews who throw eggs at Bevin both achieve an easy victory for their image of the Jew over the official picture. Just this appearance of toughness is, I think, one of the great attractions of the *Chicago Tribune* and even more of the *New York Daily News*: such organs appear to monopolize daring and impiety. The only way to combat this is by open and honest discussion about Jews, to make people aware that Jews are *real*, and to make an effort to talk about them as they really are.

The third level of discourse about Jews is on what we might call the Catskill-Broadway plane, in which there thrives a form of culture spread throughout America by the press, film, and radio. Perhaps we find its beginnings in *Abie's Irish Rose*. Danny Kaye, the Goldbergs, Eddie Cantor, Billy Rose—day by day and night after night they exploit aspects of Jewish life and Jewish character. Many

non-Jewish comedians play the same circuit; perhaps they have Jewish gag-writers. I wish I knew what Billy Rose's readers in Dubuque and Dallas, Charleston and Seattle, have made of his accounts of life and love at Lindy's; and I wish I knew what America makes of Milton Berle. Does this add to that identification of Jews with big-city life which—as Arnold Rose has observed—is so powerful an element in modern anti-Semitism? Do the lower-middle-class non-Jewish audiences of this Catskill culture have personal contacts with Jews of their own and other social levels, or is their only "contact" through these images of stage and screen? What is the attitude of these audiences towards the Jewish comic or, for that matter, the Jewish Winchell—are these performers patronized as something exotic and foreign? Are they felt to be Jews at all? I expect we would find a good deal of ambivalence, a mixture of motives, both towards the performer and the aspect of Jewish culture that he symbolizes. The same listener, for instance, may both despise and be fascinated by Winchell. I would like to know a lot more about this whole area for the sake of the light it would shed on both the myths of the Americans and the myths of and about the Jews.

The fourth level of discussion about Jews I would locate primarily in the working class and in the class areas where workers and lower-middle class fade into each other. These people have little opportunity to express their own attitudes except through conversation—on the workbench, in the bar, on the street corner. The only medium of publication available is the walls of toilets. Even apart from the question of interstate commerce, group-libel laws—such as those being pushed by the Commission on Law and Social Action of the American Jewish Congress—can hardly be effective here! These toilet walls, indeed, are the distorted reflection of—and rebellion against—middle-class piety in respect to the two things, race and sex, that so many Americans find both indecent and alluring. If this level is reached at all by the propaganda of the dreary pietists, the principal effect might perversely be only to make Jews seem

even more mysterious than before—and official culture more mendacious and mealy-mouthed. Working-class anti-Semitism is very strong indeed, if I may judge from recent studies of prejudice conducted under the auspices of the Scientific Department of the American Jewish Committee. Whether much of it is anti-Semitism that yearns for action or just big talk and griping, I do not know. Here, too, I think there is a lot we can find out.

By and large there is very little exchange among these four levels of discussion about Jews. I would like to see the pattern of the first level—the pattern of matter-of-fact, interested, informed discussion—spread as widely as possible. I don't mean to imply that we shall get rid of comments on toilet walls if we encourage public discussion about Jews. But I do think that it would do a good deal to help Jews get a sound appraisal of the actual extent of anti-Semitism; and while Jews and their non-Jewish friends would hear many disagreeable things, some of them true, we would have fewer nightmares as to what was being said behind our backs.

SO FAR, I have made clear my conviction of the futility of much that passes for militancy and—the other side of the coin—much that passes for sweet, pious reasonableness. I want now to draw a few needed distinctions.

First, I think Jewish attacks on anti-Semitism should aim at its containment, not its extirpation. In general, human efforts to eliminate vice totally, rather than to contain it within tolerable bounds, run the risk of a total "politicization" of society. That is, there are totalitarian implications in permitting political measures to encompass all of private, academic, and literary life.

Second, I think Jews go beyond the legitimate containment of anti-Semitism when they seek, as a pressure group, to limit freedom of teaching and expression. Naturally, a Jew need not himself support anti-Semitic expression; why should he? If a Jew resigns from a welcoming committee for Giesecking, he stands on his personal dignity. So does a Jew who declines to read or to place advertis-

ing in an openly anti-Semitic newspaper. But just as soon as such Jews band together and try to prevent other people from reading a paper or hearing a pianist, then they are no longer exercising a personal privilege but interfering with the personal privileges of others. In the present context of American society, freedom of expression is one of the great safeguards for Jews and all other minorities subject to prejudice. As we know, this freedom needs to be protected not only against government, but even more against private censorship—whether by Legionnaires, businessmen, unions, the Legion of Decency, or the Commission on Law and Social Action. Above all, freedom needs active support and encouragement from its friends, as well as protection from its many powerful foes.

Third, I would suggest that Jews are on the whole wisely advised not to spend their lives as anti-anti-Semites. We suspect that the vice crusader probably enjoys pornography and perhaps the anti-anti-Semite is fascinated by what he fights.

In any case, paradoxical as it may seem, Jews could become more at ease if they accepted the fact (I believe it to be a fact) that their fate as Jews in America is largely beyond their control. As many realize, Jewish well-being depends on the health of society as a whole, and only anti-Semites will claim that Jews are powerful enough to save or sink America. And it is relatively futile for Jews to address themselves to hardened anti-Semites as an audience: why should the anti-Semite listen to the Jew, especially when the latter speaks, not as one human being to another, but through the mass media of communication? We are always better off in devoting ourselves to talking to people who, at least in part, want to hear us. I think we should take our motto from William Blake: "When I tell any Truth," he said, "it is not for the sake of convincing those who do not know it, but for the sake of defending those that do."

Since, therefore, Jews waste their time when they spend it all trying to impress or repress their enemies, their very lack of power becomes an invitation to devote their major

energies to self-development. This, too, may involve combat, but of a different sort and with a different goal, for the focus would shift away from the question as to what menacing things are being said about Jews to more challenging questions: What kind of better, more creative Jewish community and American society would we like to see in the future? What are the arts that give us pleasure and enrich our lives, and how do we go about encouraging them? What will make America a more interesting and lively place to live in?

There are, I will agree, in the life of a society, times so desperate that repression of a totalitarian movement on its way to power may be required. That is not, in my opinion, the situation now—and if it were, as I have said, the Jews would not be the ones most able to do much about it. But Jews, like other Americans, can always find the situation they are in to be grim and desperate if they look hard enough, and can thus rationalize their failure to concern themselves with the possibilities of a more abundant life.

THE policy I propose, as should be evident, is motivated not by a fear that in a contest of strength and fanaticism the Jews are bound to suffer because they are fundamentally weak, but rather by a fear of the evil Jews inflict on themselves and on other Americans by interfering with freedom of expression. We seem to be building a society in which any reasonably well-organized minority group can get itself a limited veto over the mass communications industries and, with some exceptions, over public political debate. Let us return to the movies as a prime example. The focus on the problem of repression that the organized Jews share with other organized groups tends to give us movies in which disagreeable things cannot be shown about doctors, veterans, Jews, morticians, priests, labor leaders, Negroes, Marshall Plan countries, and so on; only lawyers, gangsters, nightclub operators, and Russians lack effective Hollywood lobbies. Curbed on these scores, and also on the score of open sex, the movies cater to sadism—even movies which are "good

for race relations" do this. Perhaps if Jewish energies were spent, not in adding to the list of taboos, but in trying to free the mass media and the public mind from taboos, they would not get very far. But the advantage of choosing freedom as an ally is that, while it may sometimes be defeated, it is always a more interesting and agreeable side to be on.

A dangerous disregard and contempt for artistic work is evident in the easy condemnations of allegedly anti-Semitic movies, books, and performers by the militants. But a more subtle contempt also appears in those who view every act from the standpoint of real or imaginary "others" and therefore would like to use the arts to promote "better race relations." Indeed, we find that while the militants profess scorn for tactical considerations, they are in agreement with these public-relations-minded Jews in their view of culture as a mere expendable. Recently, for instance, a producer's representative, typical of the latter group, wanted me to go on record in favor of *Home of the Brave* on the ground that it was "good for race relations." When I asked him (the somewhat ironic question) whether he thought *Symphonie Pastorale* was good for race relations, he did not understand me—what did this movie about a pastor's family tragedy have to do with race relations? In his attitude, he patronized both his own craft of movie-making and the movie audience: he assumed that people get out of a movie a message as simple as the fortune-teller's printed slip in a penny arcade. The notion that the art form itself, over a period of time, could affect the quality of American life, and hence of its race relations, is forgotten in anxious concern for the presumed immediate results. This producer's representative did not ask himself what kinds of movies he himself enjoyed seeing, but looked at his product from the stance of an outsider—this is the hallmark of the public-relations approach. But it is evident that a person who seems only to patronize others also patronizes his own human reactions and, while he thinks he manipulates the emotions of the audience, also manipulates, and eventually causes to evaporate, his own emotions.

IN FACT, it is on a platform of contempt and distrust for people that the militants and the public-relations-minded groups, whatever their internecine quarrels, can unite. While the militants assume that most Jews not of their faction and all non-Jews except their certified "friends" are anti-Semitic, and sally forth to fight them, the public-relations-minded people assume that Americans are governed only by expediency and sally forth to cozen them. Instead of defending in their own membership and among its allies the best traditions of American freedom, they devote themselves to specious arguments with which to "manipulate" the indifferent mass.

An instance of the latter practice is the argument against racial discrimination frequently advanced by Jewish organizations—and not only by them, of course—that restrictive covenants and other discriminatory practices are economically expensive. Or, in another form, the argument says that racialism makes trouble for our foreign policy. People are hardly going to like Jews and Negroes better because hating them costs money or looks bad in Indonesia! The people who put out such arguments do not "believe" them; that is, the arguments are true enough, but it is not because of them that the arguers were themselves won over to the cause of racial justice and equality. To offer arguments that do not have weight for oneself is, I think, patronizing and arrogant. Wishing, each in his way, to be "realistic" and hard-boiled, the militants and the public-relations people both are apt to forget that people need ideals and that the human passion for freedom is one of the recurrent experiences of mankind.

INDEED, to defend freedom by appeals to public-relations considerations is, in a fundamental sense, to weaken it. One reason why the American tradition of freedom is perhaps less vital now than a hundred years ago is precisely that it has become enmeshed in piety and propaganda. This, of course, is not something the Jewish defense organizations have done; it is part of a long historical development in which freedom and democracy

have become schoolbook words, have been linked with reactionary economic programs, and have been made available for the export trade. To see what has happened we need only compare the kind of writing about American democracy current in Jefferson's day with that of our own. From Jefferson to Mark Twain and Veblen there was a bite and vigor in American letters that is seldom dared today. Our various official doctrines of unity—the phrase, "the" American way of life, is revealing—and our various pressures of censorship are both symptoms and causes of the shift.

The picture of America which gets through the censorship is a stereotype, and not a very interesting one. During the last war, we experimented with an effort to create a stereotype both of America and of the "GI," and to sell this to the soldiers through advertising, radio, and the military indoctrination agencies. The soldiers resented it, but took their resentment out in swearwords and apathy, since they lacked the resources and encouragement to develop their own picture of themselves and what they were doing. Today, we seem to be marketing to the civilian population a picture as spurious, as lacking in complexity and savor, as the GI Joe myth. Jews in America, like the other minorities who make up the majority, will not thrive on such stereotypes, even though severally favorable to racial tolerance—if freedom is the price, tolerance comes too high. But, in fact, this is an unreal alternative, since minorities thrive, not on a colorless uniformity but on diversity, even conflict—including diversity and conflict among themselves.

MANY Americans have lost faith in freedom and have lost hope in the future. Many Americans have imitated the methods of their totalitarian enemies and have swung away from complacency and over-timidity in the direction of paranoia and over-aggression; still others have swung away from tolerance as a fighting faith to tolerance as a public-relations maneuver. Many Americans are attracted by force and repression, many by the veiled (and hence in many ways preferable)

force of manipulative public relations. The "mindless militants" among the American Jews, and the public-relations soothsayers, have therefore plenty of company, though not good company. But what is particularly sad and ironic in this development is that those very Jews who often violently attack the policy of "assimilation" and who make much of their Jewish consciousness seem to have been completely uprooted in America from the mainstream of Jewish values. For in the past Jews learned to depend for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on very formidable weapons of another order: namely, good judgment, the free exercise of reason, and hospitality to intellect and hatred of force, traditions which go back almost three thousand years.

Since analogous developments have overtaken many Jews and many Americans, we may suppose that the explanation for the historical shift in Jewish attitude lies less in the miseries peculiar to Jews than in those that they share with their fellow Americans. Specifically, as I have already indicated, many Jews, like many other Americans, do not know how to be happy—do not even know how to become aware of whether they are happy or not. Despite, as things go, a fair degree of security, despite very considerable material abundance, we find it somehow easier to be miserable. In our private lives, we look for, or easily fall into, agendas—ways of getting through the day and the evening. In our public lives, we live under a sense of menace and doom, create a context of chronic emergency, and are drawn to crusades against enemies, real and imaginary, because our lives are not sufficiently rewarding in their own terms. We think we would be happy in a world free of anti-Semitism and such evils, but I doubt it.

Any programs of "action" that rob us of any part of our intellectual heritage, that inhibit our curiosity and wonder about the world and the people in it, or that substitute the miasma of "piety" for the élan of truth, cannot make for happiness. And a life filled up with activities, aggressions, and anxieties is not my conception of a full life.